



Family Loyalty—the Chinese Problem

BY HIRAM BINGHAM

The United States Senator from Connecticut, by reason of his early associations, has an understanding of the Chinese which varies considerably from popular feeling on the subject. This article results from a recent trip to the Orient.

My first impressions of the Chinese were gained more than forty years ago, when I was a boy in Honolulu. My father and mother had several warm friends in the Chinese colony. My first photograph-album contains the picture of one of these Chinese friends who endeared himself to me by his habit of making attractive presents to little boys, a not uncommon Chinese trait. Some of the nicest and most valuable presents I treasured in my childhood came from Chinese friends. When I was old enough to celebrate the Chinese New Year by making calls on the Chinese shopkeepers, rice-planters, and vegetable-gardeners of my acquaintance, I was naturally delighted to find them very generous not only with goodies and delicious confections but also with packages of firecrackers, which were usually carefully treasured for use on the succeeding Fourth of July!

The best cooks in Honolulu were Chinese, and I always considered it a privilege to be invited to partake of the delicacies prepared by Ah Sam, Ah Sing, or Ah Fat. Their soups, curries, and gravies were unexcelled. Not until my recent visit to China, however, did I realize that the variety and delicacy of dishes at a family dinner-party in Peking can only be equalled in Paris or in

some great hotel whose chef learned his lessons in France.

As a boy I had known the Chinese as generous, kindly, courteous, and faithful. No prejudice against them was ever expressed by the members of my family. Nevertheless, I was not prepared for the elaborate courtesy shown by conservative Chinese in their own homes to-day. We busy, hurrying Westerners have much to learn about the amenities of life from the true followers of Confucius.

Every visitor to China is familiar with the fact that whenever one calls on a Chinese gentleman one is treated with courtesy and hospitality. It was not, however, until I spent several days in the interior of the province of Shansi and had an opportunity to come into personal contact with conservative gentlemen of the old school that I realized the extent to which Chinese kindness can go in providing for the physical wants of a visitor as well as in making him feel spiritually welcome. The weather was fairly warm, the roads were dusty. One came to appreciate fully, not only the excellent fresh tea which was served continuously, but also the moist, delicately perfumed individual hot towels offered to each guest as soon as he arrived and at refreshing intervals. At first it seemed a little strange

that no dry towels were offered afterward, but actually the evaporation of such fragrant moisture as was left on face and hands proved cooling and delightful.

A pleasant drink and a chance to bathe one's hands, however, are not unusual forms of hospitality all over the world, although nowhere have I ever found it so invariable a custom as in China. In Shansi, however, courtesy went farther. On various occasions I was taken to interior towns and cities to visit temples or to see the private collections of wealthy Chinese connoisseurs. In each case we were met outside the walls by our hosts, who likewise walked back with us through the dusty streets until we reached our motor-cars.

The climax came on the evening in which I had been invited to dine with Governor Yen, an ardent Confucian. The dinner was set for 7.30. Shortly after 6.30, at the end of a long day of dusty travel, while I was in my bath, one of the hotel servants rushed up to my room in a great state of excitement to tell me that Governor Yen's automobile was waiting for me at the door and that I must go to the governor's Yamen at once. Owing to my ignorance of old-fashioned Chinese etiquette I took this message seriously, and was much distressed that I could not possibly go immediately. Slipping on a bath-robe I looked out of the window to see what kind of a car the governor had sent, only to observe it rapidly driving back to the Yamen. This was a relief. Evidently the driver had made a mistake. So I proceeded leisurely with my dressing. Twenty minutes later one of the hotel "boys" again rushed excitedly into the room to tell me that Governor Yen had telephoned his disappointment

at my non-arrival and his desire to have me come at once. It was still half an hour before the time set for the dinner and Governor Yen's English-speaking secretary, who had been with us all day, had definitely promised to come for us in one of the governor's cars at 7.30. We were puzzling over this second message when some one suggested that it was merely the old-fashioned Chinese custom which required the courteous host to send two or three messengers at intervals before the time set for dinner, urging the guest to come immediately, chiefly to assure him that his arrival was eagerly awaited. Of course the well-bred guest would never embarrass his host by really arriving ahead of time. The idea was merely to make him feel that the invitation had not been a cold formality, but that a true welcome awaited him. Surely hospitality could go no farther.

There are Americans in China who treat the Chinese as social equals and have learned that there are no more delightful hosts or dinner-guests than well-bred Chinese. There are others, on the other hand, who never invite them to dinner and who insist that no Chinese gentleman shall cross the threshold of the Shanghai Club. "Old China hands" have threatened to resign from the clubs they founded, if a rule were adopted making Chinese gentlemen eligible for membership, or even eligible to be brought into the clubs by members as luncheon or dinner guests. This snobbish custom seems to have been brought to China by the British from India. It has been copied by those Americans who believe it best to follow in English footsteps. It is deplored by many of both nationalities. It is to be hoped that liberalism will soon prevail.

In dealing with the Chinese it would

seem to be the part of wisdom to follow so far as we can the dictates of courtesy and good breeding according to Chinese standards. The American Club in Shanghai has recently set a good example in this particular.

It is easy for us Westerners to criticise the Chinese because their standards of right and wrong are not our standards. They put family loyalty and private welfare far ahead of patriotism and the public welfare. In fact only an infinitesimal part of the Chinese people appear to have the slightest conception of what is meant by the term "the public welfare." To them whatever will benefit the family and its members is right. Whatever hurts the family is wrong. Consequently the Chinese official who looks after his relatives at the expense of the state is right, while the Chinese official who permits the members of his family to suffer while he serves the state is wrong, wholly wrong, inconceivably wrong.

The same ethical attitude makes it practically impossible for Chinese joint-stock enterprises or business corporations to succeed. It is ethically the duty of the directors to look after their families. Similarly it is the "duty" of the employees to provide for their family needs. Neither directors nor employees have any conception of the Western attitude of loyalty to a corporation. The same thing was true of our own ancestors during the Middle Ages.

This fundamental difference between the orientals and the occidentals of to-day virtually makes it impossible for the Chinese Republic to copy successfully the political institutions of Europe or America. Our government is possible only because good citizens are willing to serve it honestly and faithfully, even when this service re-

quires the subordination of family interests. Since that concept is virtually non-existent in China it is easy to see why the Chinese Republic does not function successfully, has no president, no legislative body, and has not had for several years.

The nations of Europe and America are partly responsible for the present condition of affairs in China. We have introduced Western methods of trade and commerce based on conceptions quite at variance with those of the Chinese. In America there are more jobs than hands to do it with; consequently we have invented labor-saving machinery. China has more hands to do it with than things to do, consequently when labor-saving machinery is introduced it means unemployment, starvation, and disaster to thousands of people.

Furthermore, we have taught visiting Chinese students the art of government based on a wholly different habit of mind and thought from that to which the Chinese have been accustomed for centuries. Their efforts to put our theories into practice have failed.

We have taught them political "science" when politics is really an art, not a science. A science is something which is true in all lands, like the multiplication table or the laws of gravity, while that form of government which works in Connecticut will not necessarily work in Nicaragua or even in North Dakota; and not at all in China.

An able student of Chinese politics who has lived in China for a quarter of a century and who is well conversant with Chinese public opinion and political thought told me that the basic fact in the Chinese political problem is the apathy of at least four hundred million Chinese, who not only are not democratic in their political thinking and

practices but have no conceptions and no conscious interest such as could lead them to become a democracy. At present, and for centuries past, their chief interest, almost their sole interest, has been family and clan welfare. It would seem as though the quickest way to bring the Chinese people up to the point of interest in and fitness for popular government would be for a number of provincial or regional governments to be established, each small enough for its people to see its working and to realize that it is not a vague abstraction but a piece of machinery that works for them and gets results, that improves their farming, their commerce, and their other activities.

I believe that the United States ought to take the initiative in an effort to induce the several warring groups in China mutually to agree to respect certain boundaries and each to form a government within its own boundary and confine its efforts to solidifying that government and to increasing productivity in its own area. We could offer to place a diplomatic commissioner within each such area, to help with advice and friendly counsel. We might lend the weight of our good offices to those governments that were willing to assume their share of existing national obligations.

It may be objected that any such arrangement is not practicable at the present time. I talked with a number of "old China hands" and their friends who believe that an expeditionary force of one hundred thousand trained Western troops could easily pacify China and by policing railways and rivers bring back the good old days of profitable trade. I do not agree with them. I believe that such an undertaking would greatly promote the growth of that very

anti-foreignism which has been fostered so carefully by Russia and her agents. It would cause wide-spread boycotting of all foreign goods. It would be followed by a period of wide-spread guerrilla warfare. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers would become bandits. Armed bands of marauders would, if anything, put China in worse chaos than it is in to-day. Furthermore, it would tremendously hamper the efforts of the wisest Chinese bankers and merchants, who wish to bring China back to normal, peaceful conditions.

On the other hand, I have listened to missionaries and students who assured me that the great mass of the Chinese people were as intelligent as the great mass of the American people; that our policy of protecting American lives and property in the treaty ports threatens to forfeit the high regard which the Chinese people had for America; that, while heretofore military leaders have been handling political affairs, "the prospect now is that the people themselves will soon assume control"; that China can easily put her house in order if foreigners would only keep their hands off, get out, and abrogate the special privileges which they have enjoyed under the "unequal treaties." These statements and claims I believe to be just as wrong and unwise as the claims of the "old China hands" that China can be pacified by foreign troops.

The group of Nanking missionaries who issued a statement several weeks after the Nanking outrages of March 24 had a remarkably clear grasp of the situation when they said that "the securing of equal recognition in the family of nations depends more upon the Chinese' own efforts than on the foreign governments . . . foreign nations have taken actual steps in meeting Chi-

nese claims and are agreed to go further. But the Nationalists' government has not kept its promises nor fulfilled its obligations. . . . We have favored the return of concessions to China, but to-day a foreign settlement is our only place of refuge. We have assured our people abroad that the Nationalist movement was not anti-Christian nor anti-foreign, but now we are driven from our homes and dispossessed of our property. . . . Everything we have said in behalf of the Nationalist movement is made to appear false. . . . We know there are many Chinese people who see these events as we do and who sincerely regret them. But regret and good wishes are not sufficient. Those sections of the Chinese people who really disapprove of the conditions we have pointed out should find some way to make their influence and good-will effective."

As a matter of fact, violent anti-foreign agitations have occurred repeatedly and appear to be wide-spread in central and southern China. Christianity and the Christian religion are being persistently and systematically attacked. Their leaders are being maligned and persecuted, their properties are being desecrated, looted, and seized, notwithstanding promises of protection by the Nationalist government.

I do not mean in any way to charge the leaders of the Nationalist government with bad faith. I believe that they sincerely desire to deal honestly and fairly with their foreign friends. On the other hand, it is obvious that their armies are so badly disciplined that they cannot prevent their soldiers from taking possession of foreign property, looting, robbing, and burning. Furthermore, they are in most cases quite helpless in the face of mob violence caused by agitators and demagogues seeking

their own selfishness. Nevertheless, the leaders of the Nationalist movement are chiefly to blame for the nature of the teaching which they have countenanced for the past few years. This has been destructive rather than constructive, charged with hatred rather than brotherly love, marked by envy, jealousy, covetousness, and greed rather than by far-sighted patriotism and altruism.

"Chinese history alternates between good government and anarchy," said the late Doctor Sun Yat Sen, hero of the Nationalist movement, in his famous book, "The Three Principles for the People," "and in times of anarchy there has always been the struggle for imperial power. Foreign countries have always fought battles either for religion or for freedom, but in China, during these thousands of years, the question fought over has always been imperial power." This would seem to be a fairly accurate diagnosis of the present situation. Certainly the greater part of the Chinese generals are to-day fighting not for a principle but for imperial power. The fact that they do not openly so state may be due to the last paragraph of lecture seven in "The Three Principles," where Doctor Sun says: "Each time in Chinese history when the government has changed, those who had great military power contended for the throne; if their armies were smaller they sought to be kings or princes. To-day no one in the army, whether high or low, dares attempt to be even a king or a prince. This is a step forward as far as quarrels in history are concerned." It is said that Chang Tso Lin would like nothing better than to establish a dynasty, particularly as he has an attractive and energetic son and several husky little grandsons. Although some of his

followers have urged him to assume imperial power, he has been content hitherto with gradual promotion from the rank of general to marshal and during this past year from marshal to generalissimo. Rumor has it that the imperial robes of office have been ordered.

Nevertheless, it seems foolish to expect China to become a unified nation, in the Western sense of the term. I am inclined to agree with Doctor John Willis Slaughter when he says in his recently published "East and West in China": "Representative government must make its beginning in the villages, expand to areas not too large for the personal character and influence of the gentry to be lost to view, and then develop into representative provincial government. China must in the end be a federation of provinces on a system of representation which should, for a long time, be as simple as possible. . . . It is natural that China, involved in the circumstances of effecting a change, should imagine that all good things can be made to flow from a wise and powerful central authority. There is no basis in history for this expectation. National achievement rests with a people, and not with a government. No people have proved this in a more impressive manner by their past than have the Chinese.

Some day Chinese leadership may produce a genius who realizes how very little government China needs. At that point she will have mastered the first and greatest of all political lessons."

China has four times as many people as the United States. Her people differ from one another as do the peoples of Europe. Her culture is largely mediæval. Only a small percentage of her people can read. The educated classes of the different countries of Europe in the Middle Ages could read the same language, though they could not understand one another's ordinary conversation. So it is in China to-day. Mediæval Latin was spoken by relatively few people; so with classical Chinese.

Modern China is just about as cohesive as Europe was in the Middle Ages. The Holy Roman Empire crumbled. China appears to be falling apart. Mediæval industry was largely a family affair; so it is in China to-day. It took the people of western Europe several centuries to emerge from the Middle Ages. Yet their culture was not nearly so old and firmly established as is Chinese culture. China is not likely to become Westernized in our day. Family loyalty is not likely to give way suddenly to patriotism.





Spider, Spider

BY CONRAD AIKEN

A new story by one who is cutting an individual pathway in American fiction. He is author of "Your Obituary, Well-Written," in the November SCRIBNER'S, and of the widely discussed novel "Blue Voyage."

JUST as he allowed himself to sink gloomily into the deep brown leather chair by the fireplace, reflecting, "Here I am again, confound it—why do I come here?"—she came swishing into the room, rising, as she always did, curiously high on her toes. She was smiling delightedly, almost voraciously; the silver scarf suited enchantingly her pale Botticelli face.

"How nice of you to come, Harry!" she said.

"How nice of you to ask me, Gertrude!"

"Nice of me? . . . Not a bit of it. Self-indulgent."

"Well——!"

"Well."

She sat down, crossing her knees self-consciously; self-consciously she allowed the scarf to slip half-way down her arms. It was curious, the way she had of looking at him: as if she would like to cat him—curious and disturbing. She reminded him of the wolf grandmother in "Little Red Riding-Hood." She was always smiling at him in this odd, greedy manner—showing her sharp, faultless teeth, her eyes incredibly and hungrily bright. It was her way—wasn't it?—of letting him know that she took an interest, a deep interest, in him. And why on earth shouldn't she, as the widow of his best friend?

"Well," she again repeated, "and

have you seen May lately?" She gave him this time a slower smile, a smile just a little restrained; a smile, as it were, of friendly inquisition. As he hesitated, in the face of this abrupt attack (an attack which was familiar between them, and which he had expected and desired), she added, with obvious insincerity, an insincerity which was candidly conscious: "Not that I want to pry into your personal affairs!"

"Oh, not in the least. . . . I saw her last night."

"Where? At her apartment?"

"How sly you are! . . . Yes, after dinner. We dined at the Raleigh, and had a dance or two. Good Lord, how I hate these fox-trots! . . . Then went back and played the phonograph. She had some new Beethoven. . . . *Lovely* stuff."

"*Was* it?"

She lowered her lids at him—it was her basilisk expression. As he met it, tentatively smiling, he experienced a glow of pleasure. What a relief it was, to sink comfortably into this intimacy! to submit to this searching, and yet somehow so reassuring, invasion! He knew this was only the beginning, and that she would go on. She would spare nothing. She was determined to get at the bottom of things. She would drag out every detail. And this was precisely what he wanted her to do—it was pre-